

# KICKSHAWS

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Kickshaws is currently being assembled by a series of guest editors. All contributions should be sent to the editor in Morristown, New Jersey.

HEY, Ma, Look!! We're an editor (albeit a temporary one). We use the plural pronoun on the authority of Mark Twain, who wrote, "Nobody is entitled to refer to himself as 'we' except kings, editors, and persons with tapeworms."

## Nymble

The Encyclopedia Britannica says this is short for homonymble, and defines it as an absurd exercise in logic based on puns. (Where did they discover this word? It isn't in Merriam-Webster, Random House, Funk & Wagnalls or the OED.) Here's a nymble that was going around in my college days (even if we didn't call it that):

Q: Why are fire engines red?

A: Two plus one equals three. The third letter in the alphabet is C. The sea is full of fish. The sturgeon is a fish. Caviar comes from sturgeons. Russians are fond of caviar. Fire engines are always rushin'. What other color could they be?

Speaking of odd words, Philip Cohen recently discovered one which all logologists should know: epeolatry, worship of words. It seems to have been ignored by most dictionaries, appearing only in Chambers Twentieth Century and the Funk & Wagnalls Unabridged.

## Quests

Kickshavians are at their best when engaged upon a mutual quest. Past searches for the longest one-syllable word, the multiple pronunciation of ough, and abstemious words, to name a few.

At least two 4-by-4 word squares containing 16 different letters have been reported. However, 14 different letters is the best I have been able to find in a 5-by-5 square. The one illustrated at the right is by William Sunners, in the November 1972 Word Ways. Can anybody improve on this? In the unlikely event someone finds a perfect square with 25 different letters, his

S	C	A	L	E
P	A	G	A	N
I	R	A	T	E
T	O	T	E	M
E	M	E	R	Y

prize will be the State of New Jersey, complete with A. Ross Eckler.

William Sunners wonders if it is possible to construct a 5-by-5 double word square out of words in Webster's Pocket Dictionary, or a 6-by-6 double word square out of words in Webster's Collegiate, using only one vowel. The closest he has come to the first goal is given at the right. We'd love to see Doug McIlroy's marvelous computer work on this one.

P	R	A	T	E
E	A	V	E	S
E	V	E	N	T
V	E	R	S	E
E	N	T	E	R

### More Quests

If you'd rather collect words than word squares, how about a search for nonce words? Nonce comes from the Middle English expression "for the nonce", which in turn is from the expression "for then anes" (for one purpose or occasion). We use them for non-understandable mechanisms, or as a substitute for a word we cannot think of: DINGUS, DOFUNNY, DOODAD, DOOHICKEY, GADGET, GIZMO, HOOTENANNY, THINGAMAJIG, THINGUMBOB, THINGUM-MY, WHAT-YOU-MAY-CALL-IT, WHAT-YOU-MAY-JIGGER, and WIDGET.

Or how about identifying stories having logological aspects (apart from cryptography)? For example, the mystery "The Fourth Side of the Triangle" has Ellery Queen solving a murder by anagrams. M. A. DeFord's "The Inelegant Conspiracy" in the Ellery Queen Mystery Magazine of May 1973 is another detective story depending on anagrams. Editor Eckler adds the movie "Rosemary's Baby" (1968), which featured a warlock who was known by two different names which were anagrams of each other: STEVEN MARCATO and ROMAN CASTEVET.

### Spatially Invariant Letters

In the August 1974 Kickshaws, Dave Silverman asked readers in "Alphabetic Eleusis" to determine the common property shared by various subsets of the alphabet. His fifth example, FGJLPQR, consisted of completely asymmetric letters. Let's stand this example on its head and classify the various kinds of symmetry in the remaining nineteen letters. For example:

- 1) eleven letters are not changed when given a horizontal reflection (flipped over on a vertical line passing through the letter center):  
A H I M O T U V W X Y
- 2) nine letters are not changed when given a vertical reflection (flipped over on a horizontal line passing through letter center):  
B C D E H I K O X
- 3) seven letters are not changed when rotated 180° in the plane of the paper:  
H I N O S X Z

The first two symmetries were discussed by John McClellan in the

May 1971 Word Ways; more recently, in the November 1976 Colloquy, Paul Leopold showed how the first symmetry could be used for economical vertical signs (WAY OUT) and Jules Leopold showed how the second symmetry could be used in a parlor trick utilizing the word CHOICE on a Camel cigarette pack. Note that the four letters common to all three symmetries, H I O X, can be regarded as completely symmetric letters. I can form only two spatially invariant words out of these, OHO and XIX. OHIO is a word composed of completely symmetric letters but it is not, in itself, spatially invariant.

#### Caution: Logology May Be Dangerous to Your Friendships

Writing to a friend who is a President McKinley buff, Albert Wilansky of Bethlehem, Pennsylvania pointed out that the letters M and C are often in violent opposition, as witnessed by Mohammedanism and Christianity, Malice and Charity, Misery and Comfort, and Marat and Corday. Assuming that his friend would immediately think of McKinley and Czolgosz (his assassin), he blithely added, "surely you'll have no difficulty adding to this list".

To his surprise, the return letter contained a smart-alec remark about the letters A and R. It took Wilansky some time to figure out what had happened: his friend had taken M and C to refer to him and his wife (Marshal and Carole), and had replied in kind! (Amity was eventually restored with a phone call.)

#### Pease and Queues

The obvious meaning of the adage "mind your p's and q's" is an admonition of a writing teacher to his pupils. The letters so resemble each other that if the curve of the tail does not go in the proper direction, it is difficult to distinguish between them.

Another explanation is that the expression originated in English pubs. It was the custom to keep a blackboard record of the pints and quarts consumed by each patron. If a man neglected to mind his p's and q's, he could easily reach the point where he could no longer see them.

In the early years of this century when politeness was considered more important than it is today, manners were taught to children by means of maxims. One of them was "mind your pleases and excuses" which, said quickly, could become "mind your p's and q's".

Dr. Frank Vizetelli, the famous lexicographer, was of the opinion that the old saying came from a more elegant social level. He places the origin of the phrase in the French court where gentlemen about to be admitted to the royal presence were rehearsed in formal court etiquette. They were sternly cautioned by the major-domo to avoid tripping over their long dress swords that were required at formal levees and not to lose their wigs when making the customary elaborate flourishes and bows. The standard words of advice were "Messieurs, gardez votre pieds et queues" (mind your feet and wigs).

## Onomastics

A citizen of Houston is known as a Houstonian. A person from Dallas is known as a Dallasite. One who calls San Angelo home is a San Angelino. And a fellow from Freeport is called a Freeporter. So, what do you call a citizen of Waxahachie, or Gonzales, or Monahans?

Leonard R. N. Ashley has constructed an interesting quiz based on city nicknames, such as The Hub for Boston, LA for Los Angeles, and Frisco for San Francisco. Some are easy, others not:

- |               |               |               |              |
|---------------|---------------|---------------|--------------|
| 1. The City   | 6. Chi        | 11. Yaptown   | 16. Crabtown |
| 2. Windy City | 7. San Berdoo | 12. T-Town    | 17. Beantown |
| 3. Big D      | 8. Pocaloo    | 13. Casey     | 18. Cincy    |
| 4. Jax        | 9. Philly     | 14. Big Apple | 19. Motown   |
| 5. Minnie     | 10. Stirville | 15. Gotham    | 20. Spoke    |

Answers are given in Answers and Solutions.

## Onomatopoeic Words

It seems rather strange that Word Ways has so seldom mentioned this class of words, even though they comprise about 1.25 per cent of all those in the dictionary. Here is a small selection:

buzz	fizz	jabber	oompah	slosh	whirr
cuckoo	gibber	killdeer	purr	twitter	whoosh
dingdong	hiss	lull	quack	ululate	yakity-yak
echo	hum	murmur	rumble	whiz	zoom

They are sufficiently important that it has been seriously proposed that human speech originated as an imitation of the sounds produced by animals, birds, water, rain, etc.

Detractors refer to this as the bow-wow theory, and ask the question: if it is correct, why does a rooster say cock-a-doodle-doo in English, cocoroco in French, coquelico in Spanish, chiccirichi in Italian, kikeriki in German, kykeliken in Danish, and kokko-kokko in Japanese?

## Kitty Literate

The following fable was submitted by Margo Warner Curl of Portland, Oregon:

Catesby and Catulla, his catamite, were cater-cousins who lived together in a catastasis in the Catskills. Although they were catabaptists, they lived in a catacumba. They practiced cataglotism and catachresis, and spent much time catfishing. Some considered them the first step in catagenesis.

But, oh, what sadness; Catesby, upon visiting a catoptric, was found to have cataracts, and his catamnesis was not good.

For one last fling, before Catesby was ready to be laid on the

catafalque, Catulla took him for a sail on his catamaran to Catalina. The boat was a fine cat rig with a catur with many cataglyphic insignia carved on its side by means of a catling. They laid on a goodly supply of catlap and catapasm to see them through their journey.

Before their voyage, in the tradition of all good sailors, they visited some cats, and catallactically received a stuffed catoblepas in a catogenic state to be their mascot.

If only they had thought to visit a catoptromancer!

They set sail during the catabibazon, with barely a cat's paw. The journey proceeded blissfully until one day arose a cataclysmic gale. The cataballitive winds roused Catulla from his catnap. The water arose in great catadupes. Catesby was struck with cataplexy. A broken cat whisker rendered the radio useless. They set up great caterwauls and catcalls, but none could hear. It was worse than any catasta! Both were catapulted from the boat by a catastrophic wave!

Catso! Catesby would have his catafalque after all, and so would Catulla.

All cat- words can be found either in Webster's New World Dictionary or the OED.

### Familiar Misquotations

Never mind how easy you think it is, at first. Only a double-dyed perfectionist with a tight memory has some chance of making 100 on this quiz which Franklin P. Adams devised a half-century ago:

1. What is the first line of "Rock Me to Sleep" beginning "Backward, turn backward ..."?
2. What is the first line of "The Old Oaken Bucket"?
3. Complete, from "The Rime of the Ancient Mariner", the line "Water, water, everywhere, ..."
4. What four words follow "Alas, poor Yorick"?
5. What is the first line of the poem about the bee that "improves each shining hour"?
6. What grow "from little acorns"? (I'll bet a penny that fewer get this one right than any other.)
7. Finish the line "Breathes there ..."
8. Finish the line "Twas the night before Christmas ..."

### Triple, Triple, Roil and Ripple

He nevere yet no vileynye no sayde  
In al his lif unto no manner wight

Thou hast spoken no word all this while -- nor understood none  
neither

In both Chaucer's and Shakespeare's time it was not only quite all right to use two negatives in a sentence, it was the preferred way to add emphasis.

Today, this practice is frowned upon, possibly because logic insists that two negatives make a positive. So what should we do about the good old East Texas triple negative expression "It don't make no never mind" or the one reported in the February 12, 1977 Houston Post, "I don't got no dime neither"?

### "Let's All Join 'Ands..."

Philip Cohen's citation of a Bell Labs news item using five consecutive ands reminds me of a similar construction involving the two signs at the right. The spaces between Pig and And and And and Whistle are the same; Boar and And and And and Saddle are on different lines; and "and And and And and" and "and And and And and" are both grammatically correct. P. Howard Lyons of Toronto, Canada writes, "Wouldn't the sentence 'I want to put a hyphen between the words Fish and And and And and Chips in my Fish-And-Chips sign' have been clearer if citation marks had been placed before Fish, and between Fish and and, and and and And, and And and and, and and and And, and And and and, and and and Chips, as well as after Chips?" (Please - let's not hear how this sentence should have been punctuated!)

PIG AND WHISTLE

BOAR  
AND  
SADDLE

### Updates

Philip Cohen asked for regional dialects which are not described by monosyllables: how about Latin Vulgate, Greek Koine, French Canadian Patois, Jamaican Creole, and Chinese Pidgin?

Both Jeremy Morse of London, England and Kevin Rutherford of Derby, England point out that Michael Keller failed to crash all five-letter words in Webster's Pocket Dictionary with BOSOM DEUCE FLEET MYRRH NAIAD PIOUS QUAIL -- his seven word set misses the words amply, apply, aptly, empty, imply, oddly and wryly! Ross Eckler modified Kevin Rutherford's alternative seven word proposal to obtain a valid pan-crasher: SLEET NAIAD CHORE PIOUS QUAIL LEMON MOUSY.

Timothy J. Wheeler of Shelbyville, Indiana proposes the musical "Bells Are Ringing" as another example of a one-word story, having grown out of the pun Hallelujah / Hialeah which resulted in the Hialeah Chorus. Good try, says Philip Cohen, but actually I'd rate this as a two-word story.

Jeremy Morse adds the hyphenated SCRATCH-BLOCKS and TWELFTH-NIGHTS, both found in the OED, to SCHWARZSCHILD Radius as examples of thirteen-letter two-syllable words. He believes STRENGTHLESSNESS is the longest three-syllable word in the OED.

Philip Cohen notes that the vowelless word RHM appears as an internal trigram in the Web 2 below-the-line word BURHMOOT.

Quickies

Contemplate: the sound of one hand clapping; an imaginary apple containing a real worm; two locked boxes, each containing the key to the other.

What word ending in -ict does not rhyme with convict?

A recent news item in a Tulsa paper tells of a company which plans to make methane from manure using the Caloric Recycle Anaerobic Process. I think my leg is being pulled.

What do the following words have in common: blithered, pallatic, stoven, killarneyed, stotius?

From time to time, I ask people absurd questions just to get their reactions: for example, "What is the opposite of vanilla?" Most people answered "chocolate", but one girl said "tutti-frutti". Why? Well, vanilla is plain and tutti-frutti is fancy. The most disconcerting answer -- one that I can't logically fault -- was "vanwella".

Albert Wilansky presents his nominee for the most tongue-twisting name of a musical group: Kyung-Wha Chung, Myung-Whyn Chung, and Myung-Wha Chung. Try introducing them to your guests at your next cocktail party! (This violinist-pianist-cellist trio presented a concert in Philadelphia on November 10, 1976.)

The Word Buff asks readers to identify the common property of the words HALLELUJAH, MAMA and JEANS, and to add to this list if possible.

666 is the Biblical number of the beast, but does anyone know what the beast is? Boris Randolph presents a numero-logological proof that it is a FOX: F is the sixth letter of the alphabet, O is the fifteenth ( $1 + 5 = 6$ ), and X is the twenty-fourth ( $2 + 4 = 6$ ). Simple, n'est-ce pas?

Just in case you missed this bit of cleverness, here is what A. M. Zwicky published in a recent issue of Verbatim: I steal the keel / I stole the coal / I have stolen the colon. Can readers think of other wacky conjugations?

Final Thought

Eckler  
Is not a heckler  
Nor is he a fanatic  
Even though he insists that all articles published  
Be grammatic.